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Amendments To The Claims:

Amendment

Attorney Docket No.: S63.2-6748-US03

Claims 1 - 84 (Canceled).

85. (Previously presented) A protective sleeve for a balloon dilatation catheter comprising:
an elongate tubular member having a neck portion and a slit extending along the entire length of the tubular member from a proximal end to a distal end thereof, wherein a distal portion of the tubular member is flared from the neck portion to the distal end of the tubular member to define an enlarged funnel-like opening.

86. (Original) A protective sleeve as defined in claim 85, wherein the slit extends along a plane that includes a longitudinal axis of the tubular member.

87. (Original) A protective sleeve as defined in claim 85 wherein the slit is helical.

88. (Original) A protective sleeve as defined in claim 85 further comprising:
an outer sleeve disposed about those portions of the tubular member proximal of the flared distal portion, the outer sleeve being configured to maintain the slit of the tubular member in a closed configuration.

89. (Original) A protective sleeve as defined in claim 88 wherein the outer sleeve is elastomeric.

90. (Canceled) A balloon catheter and a protective sleeve for the balloon of the catheter comprising, in combination:
a catheter having a shaft and a balloon mounted thereon, wherein the shaft has a distal tip portion that extends distally beyond a distal extremity of the balloon; and
a protective sleeve as defined in claim 85, wherein a proximal portion of the sleeve is disposed about and encloses the balloon, the sleeve being mounted on the catheter to locate the distal tip portion of the catheter at the narrowest portion of the funnel defined by the flared distal portion of the tubular member whereby a guidewire backloaded through the flared distal portion

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will be guided into registry with the distal tip of the catheter shaft.